(b) if so, how the shortage of more than 11 thousand officers is going to be met so that our combat capabilities do not adversely affect nation's security; and

(c) is there any thinking about introducing conscription as one of the measure to enlist more officers and thereby fill up the growing gap?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) In the Indian Military-Academy, a total of 1683 Gentleman Cadets are presently undergoing training against the existing capacity of 1650. The National Defence Academy also has been functioning to its full capacity except the first batch of 2008.

(b) Several steps have been taken by the three Services to attract more talented youth to join the Defence Forces. All officers including those in Short Service Commission (SSC) have been made eligible to hold substantive rank of Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel and equivalents after 2,6 and 13 years of reckonable service respectively. The tenure of SSC Officers has been extended to 14 years in the three Services. Armed Forces have undertaken sustained Image projection and publicity campaign to create awareness among the youth on the advantages of taking up a challenging and satisfying career. Awareness campaigns, participation in career fairs and exhibitions, advertisements in print and electronic media, motivational lectures in schools and colleges are also some of other measures in this direction.

(c) Presently there is no such proposal.

Delay in procurement of deep-submergence rescue vessels

2522. SHRIMATI SYEDAANWARATAIMUR:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that procurement of two deep-submergence rescue vessels approved in November, 2002 for the Indian Navy is still pending;

(b) if so, how trapped sailors in a disabled submarine deep under water or sinking to th.e bottom of the sea, will be rescued to avoid a situation which resulted in slow death of 118 sailors on board the disabled Russian Nuclear submarine Kursk in the Barents Sea in August, 2000; and

(c) what is the present status of the procurement process?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) A fresh Request For Proposal (RFP) is to be issued for procurement of deep-submergence rescue vessles.

(b) The Navy operates Indian Naval Ship (INS) Nireeksahk (Diving Support Vessel) which uses a rescue beli'to rescue personnel within its designed parameters from a submarine in distress. The option for a global partnership for such rescue is also available.

(c) The Request For Proposal (RPF) is under formulation.

Acquisition of ageing US Naval Ship

2523. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Navy acquired an ageing foreign ship from the U.S. Nevy after refurbishment at a cost of.$50.63 million without physical assessment of the ship;